

How to Make Wise Decisions... And Stay in Harmony!

All couples will face making decisions during their married life. While some issues involve easier decisions like who handles the remote control or where to eat dinner. Others may require careful consideration because they involve important issues. Career choices, child care and major investments can fall under this category. As you and your spouse face significant choices, it's important to have a method of decision making which allows you to remain in harmony. In other words, a way to help create a situation where peace is kept in the midst of negotiation. Having a system can also help guard against a major harmony roadblock: manipulation.

A couple saw the negative affects of manipulation when they were buying life-insurance. Despite a great sales pitch, a salesman was unable to convince the couple to purchase his policy. "I absolutely don't want to pressure you into a decision," he proclaimed while walking towards the door. "Please sleep on it tonight, and if you wake up in the morning, let me know what you've decided."

As this couple found out, being manipulated is not a helpful way to make a wise decision. Likewise, when your mate pressures you during an important choice, it can cause major conflict.

The Art of Marital Negotiation

One of the most helpful methods my wife, Erin, and I use as we negotiate major decisions is called a "Pro and Con" list. Erin and I used this while in the middle of an argument concerning my schooling.

During my doctoral studies, I had to take a statistics class. Trouble began when during the first meeting, the professor recited a list of formulas that we should know. My stomach sickened when nothing he said sounded remotely familiar. I rushed home and informed Erin that I was dropping the class! Unfortunately, Erin didn't agree and a major argument erupted.

The "negotiation" might have lasted longer except our two-year old daughter, Taylor, interceded. "That's enough guys!" she yelled, and walloped me on the backside with a wooden spoon. The shock of being reprimanded by a two-year old caused us to double over with laughter. Once the tense moment ended, Erin and I were able to use the "pro and con" list to make a wise decision regarding my class.

First, after dividing a piece of paper into a "pro" and "con" side, we started brainstorming why dropping the class would be a poor decision. We repeated the same process for the pro side--listing any reason why dropping the class would be a good choice. It's important when brainstorming to keep from evaluating the reasons until you've recorded every idea.

Our next step was to evaluate each "pro" and "con" and tease out the more relevant or important ones. Finally, when all the important factors were highlighted, we discussed what seemed like the best decision. Although I wasn't thrilled, the wise choice was to remain in the class.

~~Regardless of whether I passed or failed the class (Amazingly, I ended up with an "A"), the main issue was that we agreed that our decision was the best choice. If a choice is not obvious or agreed upon, then continue listing additional pros and cons. You might need to take a break or show the list to a neutral third party for advice. Remember King Solomon's encouragement, "...But a wise man is he who listens to counsel."~~
(Proverbs 12:15 (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2012.15>)).

Using the pro and con list allowed Erin and I to stay in harmony through a major disagreement. As you and your spouse negotiate important decisions, I encourage you to use a method to help keep the peace.

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